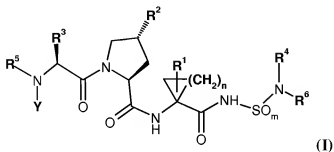


This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended) A compound of formula I:



wherein

n is 1;

m is 2;

R¹ is ethyl or vinyl;

R² is selected from -CH₂-R²⁰, -NH-R²⁰, -O-R²⁰, and -O-X-R²⁰, wherein

X is (C_{2,3})alkenyl, (C_{2,3})alkynyl, or (C_{1,3})alkyl; and

R²⁰ is (C₆ or C₁₀)aryl or **Het**, wherein said (C₆ or C₁₀)aryl or **Het** is optionally substituted with **R²⁰⁰**; wherein

R²⁰⁰ is one to four substituents each independently selected from H, halogen, cyano, (C₁₋₆)alkyl, (C₃₋₇)cycloalkyl, aryl-(C₁₋₆)alkyl-, aryl, oxo, thioxo, -OR²⁰¹, -SR²⁰¹, -SOR²⁰¹, -SO₂R²⁰¹, -N(R²⁰²)R²⁰¹, and -CON(R²⁰²)R²⁰¹, wherein each of said alkyl, cycloalkyl, and aryl is optionally further substituted with **R²⁰⁰⁰**;

R²⁰¹ in each case is independently selected from H, (C₁₋₆)alkyl, (C₂₋₆)alkenyl, and aryl, wherein each of said alkyl and aryl is optionally further substituted with **R²⁰⁰⁰**;

R²⁰² in each case is independently selected from H and (C₁₋₆)alkyl;

R²⁰⁰⁰ in each case is one to three substituents each independently selected from

halogen, aryl, **Het**, -OR²⁰⁰¹, cyano, -N(R²⁰⁰²)(R²⁰⁰¹), and R²⁰⁰³, wherein said aryl and **Het** are optionally substituted with one, two or three substituents each independently selected from (C₁₋₆)alkyl and -O-(C₁₋₆)alkyl;

R²⁰⁰¹ in each case is independently selected from aryl, aryl-(C₁₋₆)alkyl-, -C(O)-R²⁰⁰³, -C(O)O-R²⁰⁰³;

R²⁰⁰² in each case is independently selected from H and (C₁₋₆)alkyl;

R²⁰⁰³ in each case is independently selected from (C₁₋₈)alkyl, and (C₃₋₇)cycloalkyl;

R³ is (C₁₋₈)alkyl or (C₃₋₇)cycloalkyl, each optionally substituted with one substituent selected from, -OR³⁰, -C(=O)OR³⁰, wherein R³⁰ is H, (C₁₋₆)alkyl, aryl, or aryl(C₁₋₆)alkyl-;

R⁵ is selected from B-C(=O)-, B-O-C(=O)-, and B-N(R⁵¹)-C(=O)-; wherein B is selected from:

- (i) (C₁₋₁₀)alkyl optionally substituted with one or more substituents each selected independently from -COOH, -COO(C₁₋₆)alkyl, -OH, halogen, -OC(=O)(C₁₋₆)alkyl, -O(C₁₋₆)alkyl, -NH₂, -NH(C₁₋₆)alkyl, -N((C₁₋₆)alkyl)₂, -C(=O)NH₂, -C(=O)NH(C₁₋₆)alkyl and -C(=O)N((C₁₋₆)alkyl)₂;
- (ii) (C₃₋₇)cycloalkyl, or (C₃₋₇)cycloalkyl-(C₁₋₄)alkyl-, each optionally substituted with one or more substituents each selected independently from (C₁₋₆)alkyl, halogen, -COOH, -COO(C₁₋₆)alkyl, -OH, -O(C₁₋₆)alkyl, -NH₂, -NH(C₁₋₆)alkyl, -N((C₁₋₆)alkyl)₂, -C(=O)NH₂, -C(=O)NH(C₁₋₆)alkyl and -C(=O)N((C₁₋₆)alkyl)₂;

R⁵¹ is selected from H and (C₁₋₆)alkyl;

provided that B is not (C₁₋₁₀)alkyl unsubstituted or (C₁₋₁₀)alkyl substituted with halogen when R⁵ is B-O-C(=O)-;

Y is H;

R⁴ and R⁶ are each independently selected from H, (C₁₋₆)alkyl, -O-(C₁₋₆)alkyl, (C₃₋₇)cycloalkyl, (C₃₋₇)cycloalkyl-(C₁₋₆)alkyl-, aryl, **Het**, and aryl-(C₁₋₆)alkyl-; wherein said (C₁₋₆)alkyl, -O-(C₁₋₆)alkyl, (C₃₋₇)cycloalkyl,

(C₃₋₇)cycloalkyl-(C₁₋₆)alkyl-, aryl and aryl-(C₁₋₆)alkyl- are each optionally substituted with one or more substituents each independently selected from halogen, (C₁₋₆)alkyl, hydroxy, cyano, O-(C₁₋₆)alkyl, -NH₂, -NH(C₁₋₄)alkyl, -N((C₁₋₄)alkyl)₂, -COOH, and -COO(C₁₋₆)alkyl; or

R⁴ and **R⁶** are linked, together with the nitrogen to which they are bonded, to form a 3- to 7-membered monocyclic saturated or unsaturated heterocycle optionally fused to at least one other cycle to form a heteropolycycle, each of said heterocycle and heteropolycycle optionally containing from one to three additional heteroatoms each independently selected from N, S and O, and each of said heterocycle and heteropolycycle being optionally substituted with one or more substituents each independently selected from halogen, (C₁₋₆)alkyl, hydroxy, cyano, O-(C₁₋₆)alkyl, -NH₂, -NH(C₁₋₄)alkyl, -N((C₁₋₄)alkyl)₂, -CO-NH₂, -CO-NH(C₁₋₄)alkyl, -CO-N((C₁₋₄)alkyl)₂, -COOH, and -COO(C₁₋₆)alkyl;

wherein **Het** is defined as a 3- to 7-membered heterocycle having 1 to 4 heteroatoms each independently selected from O, N and S, which may be saturated, unsaturated or aromatic, and which is optionally fused to at least one other cycle to form a 4- to 14-membered heteropolycycle having wherever possible 1 to 5 heteroatoms, each independently selected from O, N and S, said heteropolycycle being saturated, unsaturated or aromatic;

or a diastereomer thereof or a salt thereof.

2. (Currently Amended) The compound according to claim 1 wherein
- n** is 1;
 - m** is 2;
 - R¹** is ethyl or vinyl;
 - R²** is selected from -CH₂-**R²⁰**, -NH-**R²⁰**, -O-**R²⁰**, and -O-**X-R²⁰**, wherein **X** is (C₂₋₃)alkynyl, or (C₁₋₃)alkyl; and

- R²⁰** is (C₆ or C₁₀)aryl or **Het**, wherein said (C₆ or C₁₀)aryl or **Het** is optionally substituted with **R²⁰⁰**; wherein
- R²⁰⁰** is one to four substituents each independently selected from H, halogen, cyano, (C₁₋₆)alkyl, (C₃₋₇)cycloalkyl, aryl-(C₁₋₆)alkyl-, aryl, oxo, thioxo, -OR²⁰¹, -SR²⁰¹, -SOR²⁰¹, -SO₂R²⁰¹, -N(R²⁰²)R²⁰¹, and -CON(R²⁰²)R²⁰¹; wherein each of said alkyl, cycloalkyl, and aryl is optionally further substituted with **R²⁰⁰⁰**;
- R²⁰¹** in each case is independently selected from H, (C₁₋₆)alkyl, (C₂₋₆)alkenyl, and aryl, wherein each of said alkyl and aryl is optionally further substituted with **R²⁰⁰⁰**;
- R²⁰²** in each case is independently selected from H and (C₁₋₆)alkyl;
- R²⁰⁰⁰** in each case is one to three substituents each independently selected from halogen, aryl, **Het**, -OR²⁰⁰¹, cyano, -N(R²⁰⁰²)(R²⁰⁰¹), and **R²⁰⁰³**, wherein said aryl and **Het** are optionally substituted with one, two or three substituents each independently selected from (C₁₋₆)alkyl and -O-(C₁₋₆)alkyl;
- R²⁰⁰¹** in each case is independently selected from aryl, aryl-(C₁₋₆)alkyl-, -C(O)-**R²⁰⁰³**;
- R²⁰⁰²** in each case is independently selected from H and (C₁₋₆)alkyl;
- R²⁰⁰³** in each case is independently selected from (C₁₋₈)alkyl and (C₃₋₇)cycloalkyl;
- R³** is (C₁₋₈)alkyl, or (C₃₋₇)cycloalkyl;
- R⁵** is selected from **B-C(=O)-**, **B-O-C(=O)-**, and **B-N(R⁵¹)-C(=O)-** wherein **B** is selected from:
- (C₁₋₁₀)alkyl optionally substituted with one or more substituents each selected independently from -COOH, -COO(C₁₋₆)alkyl, -OH, halogen, -OC(=O)(C₁₋₆)alkyl, -O(C₁₋₆)alkyl, -NH₂, -NH(C₁₋₆)alkyl, -N((C₁₋₆)alkyl)₂, -C(=O)NH₂, -C(=O)NH(C₁₋₆)alkyl and -C(=O)N((C₁₋₆)alkyl)₂;
 - (C₃₋₇)cycloalkyl, or (C₃₋₇)cycloalkyl-(C₁₋₄)alkyl-, each optionally substituted with one or more substituents each selected independently

from (C₁₋₆)alkyl, halogen, -COOH, -COO(C₁₋₆)alkyl, -OH, -O(C₁₋₆)alkyl, -NH₂, -NH(C₁₋₆)alkyl, -N((C₁₋₆)alkyl)₂, -C(=O)NH₂, -C(=O)NH(C₁₋₆)alkyl and -C(=O)N((C₁₋₆)alkyl)₂;

R⁵¹ is H;

provided that B is not (C₁₋₁₀)alkyl unsubstituted or (C₁₋₁₀)alkyl substituted with halogen when **R⁵** is **B-O-C(=O)-**;

Y is H;

R⁴ and **R⁶** are each independently selected from H, (C₁₋₆)alkyl, -O-(C₁₋₆)alkyl, (C₃₋₇)cycloalkyl, (C₃₋₇)cycloalkyl-(C₁₋₆)alkyl-, aryl, **Het**, and aryl-(C₁₋₆)alkyl-; wherein said (C₁₋₆)alkyl, -O-(C₁₋₆)alkyl, (C₃₋₇)cycloalkyl, (C₃₋₇)cycloalkyl-(C₁₋₆)alkyl-, aryl and aryl-(C₁₋₆)alkyl- are each optionally substituted with one or more substituents each independently selected from halogen, (C₁₋₆)alkyl, hydroxy, cyano, O-(C₁₋₆)alkyl, -NH₂, -NH(C₁₋₄)alkyl, -N((C₁₋₄)alkyl)₂ and -COOH, or

R⁴ and **R⁶** are linked, together with the nitrogen to which they are bonded, to form a 3- to 7-membered monocyclic saturated or unsaturated heterocycle optionally fused to at least one other cycle to form a heteropolycycle, each of said heterocycle and heteropolycycle optionally containing from one to three additional heteroatoms each independently selected from N, S and O, and each of said heterocycle and heteropolycycle being optionally substituted with one or more substituents each independently selected from halogen, (C₁₋₆)alkyl, hydroxy, cyano, O-(C₁₋₆)alkyl, -NH₂, -NH(C₁₋₄)alkyl, -N((C₁₋₄)alkyl)₂, -CO-NH₂, -CO-NH(C₁₋₄)alkyl, -CO-N((C₁₋₄)alkyl)₂, -COOH, and -COO(C₁₋₆)alkyl;

wherein **Het** is defined as a 3- to 7-membered heterocycle having 1 to 4 heteroatoms each independently selected from O, N and S, which may be saturated, unsaturated or aromatic, and which is optionally fused to at least one other cycle to form a 4- to 14-membered heteropolycycle having wherever possible 1 to 5 heteroatoms, each independently selected from O, N and S, said heteropolycycle being saturated,

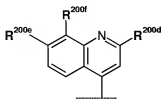
unsaturated or aromatic;

or a diastereomer thereof or a salt thereof.

3. (Currently amended) The compound according to claim 1 wherein R^5 is selected from $B-O-C(=O)-$, and $B-N(R^{51})-C(=O)-$; wherein B and R^{51} are defined as in claim 1, provided that B is not (C_{1-10}) alkyl unsubstituted or (C_{1-10}) alkyl substituted with halogen when R^5 is $B-O-C(=O)-$.
4. (Currently Amended) The compound according to claim 3 wherein R^{51} is H and B is selected from:
- (i) (C_{1-7}) alkyl optionally substituted with one or two or three substituents each independently selected from fluoro, chloro, bromo, hydroxy, methoxy and ethoxy; or optionally substituted with $-COOCH_3$;
 - (ii) (C_{3-7}) cycloalkyl, or (C_{3-7}) cycloalkyl-methyl-, each optionally substituted with one or two substituents each independently selected from methyl, ethyl, hydroxy, methoxy and ethoxy;
- provided that B is not (C_{1-7}) alkyl unsubstituted or (C_{1-7}) alkyl substituted with halogen when R^5 is $B-O-C(=O)-$.
5. (Previously presented) The compound according to claim 1 wherein Y is H.
6. (Previously presented) The compound according to claim 1 wherein R^3 is *tert*-butyl.
7. (Previously presented) The compound according to claim 1 wherein R^2 is selected from $-O-R^{20}$ and $-O-X-R^{20}$, wherein R^{20} and X are defined as in claim 1.

8. (Original) The compound according to claim 7 wherein R^2 is $-O-X-R^{20}$, wherein X is (C_3) alkynyl and R^{20} is $(C_6 \text{ or } C_{10})$ aryl.

9. (Original) The compound according to claim 7 wherein R^2 is $-O-R^{20}$, wherein R^{20} is



wherein

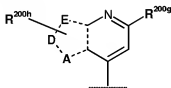
R^{200d} is $-OR^{201}$, wherein R^{201} is (C_{1-6}) alkyl;

R^{200e} is H or $-OR^{201}$, wherein R^{201} is (C_{1-6}) alkyl; and

R^{200f} is (C_{1-6}) alkyl, halogen, $-SR^{201}$, $-SO_2R^{201}$, or $-OR^{201}$, wherein R^{201} is (C_{1-6}) alkyl optionally further substituted with (C_{3-7}) cycloalkyl or phenyl.

10. (Original) The compound according to claim 9 wherein R^{200d} is $-OR^{201}$ wherein R^{201} is ethyl.

11. (Original) The compound according to claim 7 wherein R^2 is $-O-R^{20}$, wherein R^{20} is



wherein

one of A , D , and E represents a S atom and the other two of A , D , and E represent C atoms;

---- represents a single bond between a C atom and an S atom, and represents a single bond or a double bond between two C atoms; provided that each C atom is bonded by one double bond;

R^{200g} is H or $-OR^{201}$, wherein R^{201} is (C_{1-6}) alkyl or (C_{2-6}) alkenyl; and

R^{200h} is one or two substituents each independently selected from H, cyano, (C_{1-6}) alkyl

and $\text{-SO}_2\text{-(C}_{1-6}\text{)alkyl}$; wherein each R^{200b} is bonded to a C atom which would otherwise bear a hydrogen atom.

12. (Previously presented) The compound according to claim 1 wherein n is 1.
13. (Previously presented) The compound according to claim 1 wherein R^1 is vinyl.
14. (Canceled)
15. (Previously presented) The compound according to claim 1 wherein:
- (i) R^4 and R^6 are each independently selected from H, $(\text{C}_{1-6})\text{alkyl}$, $\text{-O-(C}_{1-6}\text{)alkyl}$, $(\text{C}_{3-7})\text{cycloalkyl}$, $(\text{C}_{3-7})\text{cycloalkyl-(C}_{1-6}\text{)alkyl-}$, aryl and aryl- $(\text{C}_{1-6}\text{)alkyl-}$; wherein said $(\text{C}_{1-6})\text{alkyl}$, $\text{-O-(C}_{1-6}\text{)alkyl}$, $(\text{C}_{3-7})\text{cycloalkyl}$, $(\text{C}_{3-7})\text{cycloalkyl-(C}_{1-6}\text{)alkyl-}$, aryl and aryl- $(\text{C}_{1-6}\text{)alkyl-}$ are each optionally substituted with one to three substituents each independently selected from halogen, $(\text{C}_{1-6})\text{alkyl}$, hydroxy, cyano, $\text{O-(C}_{1-6}\text{)alkyl}$, and -COOH ; or
 - (ii) R^4 and R^6 are linked, together with the nitrogen to which they are bonded, to form a 3- to 7-membered monocyclic saturated or unsaturated heterocycle, said heterocycle optionally containing from one to three additional heteroatoms each independently selected from N, S and O, and said 3- to 7-membered monocyclic saturated or unsaturated heterocycle being optionally substituted with one to three substituents each independently selected from halogen, $(\text{C}_{1-6})\text{alkyl}$, hydroxy, cyano, $\text{O-(C}_{1-6}\text{)alkyl}$, -NH_2 , $\text{-NH(C}_{1-4}\text{)alkyl}$, $\text{-N((C}_{1-4}\text{)alkyl)}_2$, -COOH , and $\text{-COO(C}_{1-6}\text{)alkyl}$.
16. (Currently Amended) The compound according to claim 1 wherein:
- n is 1;
 - m is 2;

- R¹** is ethyl or vinyl;
- R²** is selected from **-O-R²⁰** and **-O-X-R²⁰**, wherein
X is (C₂₋₃)alkenyl, (C₂₋₃)alkynyl, or (C₁₋₃)alkyl; and
R²⁰ is (C₆ or C₁₀)aryl or **Het**, wherein said (C₆ or C₁₀)aryl or **Het** is optionally
mono-, di-, tri- or tetra-substituted with **R²⁰⁰**, wherein each **R²⁰⁰** is
independently selected from H, halogen, cyano, (C₁₋₆)alkyl,
(C₃₋₇)cycloalkyl, aryl-(C₁₋₆)alkyl-, aryl, oxo, thioxo, **-OR²⁰¹**, **-SR²⁰¹**,
-SOR²⁰¹, **-SO₂R²⁰¹**, **-N(R²⁰²)R²⁰¹**, and **-CON(R²⁰²)R²⁰¹**; wherein each of
said alkyl, cycloalkyl, and aryl is optionally further substituted with **R²⁰⁰⁰**;
R²⁰¹ in each case is independently selected from H, (C₁₋₆)alkyl and aryl, wherein
each of said alkyl and aryl is optionally further substituted with **R²⁰⁰⁰**;
R²⁰² is H or (C₁₋₆)alkyl;
R²⁰⁰⁰ is one to three substituents each independently selected from halogen, aryl,
Het, **-OR²⁰⁰¹**, cyano, **-N(R²⁰⁰²)(R²⁰⁰¹)**, and **R²⁰⁰³**, wherein said aryl and **Het**
are optionally substituted with one, two or three substituents selected from
(C₁₋₆)alkyl and **-O-(C₁₋₆)alkyl**;
R²⁰⁰¹ in each case is independently selected from aryl, aryl-(C₁₋₆)alkyl-, **-C(O)-**
R²⁰⁰³,
R²⁰⁰² is H or (C₁₋₆)alkyl;
R²⁰⁰³ is (C₁₋₈)alkyl and (C₃₋₇)cycloalkyl;
- R³** is (C₁₋₈)alkyl;
- R⁵** is selected from **B-O-C(=O)-** and **B-N(R⁵¹)-C(=O)-**; wherein **B** is selected from:
- (i) (C₁₋₁₀)alkyl optionally substituted with one or more substituents each
selected independently from **-COOH**, **-OH**, halogen, **-NH₂**, **-NH(C₁₋₆)alkyl**,
-N((C₁₋₆)alkyl)₂,
 - (ii) (C₃₋₇)cycloalkyl, optionally substituted with one or more substituents each
selected independently from (C₁₋₆)alkyl, halogen, **-COOH**,
-COO(C₁₋₆)alkyl, **-OH**, **-O(C₁₋₆)alkyl**, **-NH₂**, **-NH(C₁₋₆)alkyl**,
-N((C₁₋₆)alkyl)₂,

R⁵¹ is selected from H and (C₁₋₆)alkyl;
provided that **B** is not (C₁₋₁₀)alkyl unsubstituted or (C₁₋₁₀)alkyl substituted with halogen,
when **R⁵** is B-O-C(=O)-;

Y is H;

R⁴ and **R⁶** are each independently selected from H, (C₁₋₆)alkyl, (C₃₋₇)cycloalkyl, (C₃₋₇)cycloalkyl-(C₁₋₆)alkyl-, aryl and aryl-(C₁₋₆)alkyl-; wherein said (C₁₋₆)alkyl, (C₃₋₇)cycloalkyl, (C₃₋₇)cycloalkyl-(C₁₋₆)alkyl-, aryl and aryl-(C₁₋₆)alkyl- are optionally substituted with one or more substituents independently selected from halogen, (C₁₋₆)alkyl, hydroxy, cyano, O-(C₁₋₆)alkyl, -NH₂, -NH(C₁₋₄)alkyl, -N((C₁₋₄)alkyl)₂, -COOH, and -COO(C₁₋₆)alkyl; or

R⁴ and **R⁶** are linked, together with the nitrogen to which they are bonded, to form a 3- to 7-membered monocyclic saturated or unsaturated heterocycle optionally fused to at least one other cycle to form a heteropolycycle, said heterocycle and heteropolycycle optionally containing from one to three further heteroatoms independently selected from N, S and O, and said 3- to 7-membered monocyclic saturated or unsaturated heterocycle being optionally substituted with one or more substituents independently selected from halogen, (C₁₋₆)alkyl, hydroxy, cyano, O-(C₁₋₆)alkyl, -NH₂, -NH(C₁₋₄)alkyl, -N((C₁₋₄)alkyl)₂, -CO-NH₂, -CO-NH(C₁₋₄)alkyl, -CO-N((C₁₋₄)alkyl)₂, -COOH, and -COO(C₁₋₆)alkyl;

wherein **Het** is defined as a 3- to 7-membered heterocycle having 1 to 4 heteroatoms each independently selected from O, N and S, which may be saturated, unsaturated or aromatic, and which is optionally fused to at least one other cycle to form a 4- to 14-membered heteropolycycle having wherever possible 1 to 5 heteroatoms, each independently selected from O, N and S, said heteropolycycle being saturated, unsaturated or aromatic;

or a diastereomer thereof or a salt thereof.

17. (Currently Amended) The compound according to claim 1 wherein:

R^5 is $B-O-C(=O)-$; wherein B is selected from:

- (i) (C_{1-10}) alkyl optionally substituted with one or more substituents each selected independently from $-COOH$, $-COO(C_{1-6})$ alkyl, $-OH$, halogen, $-OC(=O)(C_{1-6})$ alkyl, $-O(C_{1-6})$ alkyl, $-NH_2$, $-NH(C_{1-6})$ alkyl, $-N((C_{1-6})alkyl)_2$,
- (ii) (C_{3-7}) cycloalkyl, or (C_{3-7}) cycloalkyl- (C_{1-4}) alkyl-,

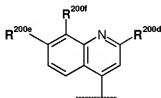
provided that B is not (C_{1-10}) alkyl unsubstituted or (C_{1-10}) alkyl substituted with halogen, when R^5 is $B-O-C(=O)-$;

Y is H;

R^3 is *tert*-butyl;

R^2 is $-O-X-R^{20}$, wherein X is (C_3) alkynyl and R^{20} is $(C_6$ or $C_{10})$ aryl; or

R^2 is $-O-R^{20}$ wherein R^{20} is



wherein

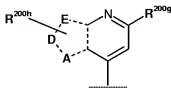
R^{200d} is $-OR^{201}$, wherein R^{201} is (C_{1-6}) alkyl;

R^{200e} is H or $-OR^{201}$, wherein R^{201} is (C_{1-6}) alkyl; and

R^{200f} is (C_{1-6}) alkyl, halogen, $-SR^{201}$, $-SO_2R^{201}$, or $-OR^{201}$, wherein R^{201} is

(C_{1-6}) alkyl optionally further substituted with (C_{3-7}) cycloalkyl or phenyl;

or R^{20} is



wherein

one of A, D, and E represents a S atom and the other two of A, D, and E represent C atoms;

---- represents a single bond between a C atom and an S atom, and represents a

single bond or a double bond between two C atoms; provided that each C atom is bonded by one double bond;

R^{200g} is H or -OR²⁰¹, wherein **R²⁰¹** is (C₁₋₆)alkyl or (C₂₋₆)alkenyl; and

R^{200h} is one or two substituents each independently selected from H, cyano, (C₁₋₆)alkyl and -SO₂-(C₁₋₆)alkyl; wherein each **R^{200h}** is bonded to a C atom which would otherwise bear a hydrogen atom;

R¹ is ethyl or vinyl;

n is 1;

m is 2; and

R⁴ and **R⁶** are each independently selected from H, (C₁₋₆)alkyl, -O-(C₁₋₆)alkyl, (C₃₋₇)cycloalkyl, (C₃₋₇)cycloalkyl-(C₁₋₆)alkyl-, aryl and aryl-(C₁₋₆)alkyl-; wherein said (C₁₋₆)alkyl, (C₃₋₇)cycloalkyl, (C₃₋₇)cycloalkyl-(C₁₋₆)alkyl-, aryl and aryl-(C₁₋₆)alkyl- are optionally substituted with one to three substituents independently selected from halogen, (C₁₋₆)alkyl, hydroxy, cyano, O-(C₁₋₆)alkyl, -COOH, and -COO(C₁₋₆)alkyl; or

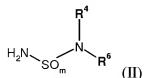
R⁴ and **R⁶** are linked, together with the nitrogen to which they are bonded, to form a 3- to 7-membered monocyclic saturated or unsaturated heterocycle, said heterocycle optionally containing from one to three further heteroatoms each independently selected from N, S and O, and said 3- to 7-membered monocyclic saturated or unsaturated heterocycle being optionally substituted with one to three substituents each independently selected from halogen, (C₁₋₆)alkyl, hydroxy, cyano, O-(C₁₋₆)alkyl, -NH₂, -NH(C₁₋₄)alkyl, -N((C₁₋₄)alkyl)₂-, -COOH, and -COO(C₁₋₆)alkyl;

or a diastereomer thereof or a salt thereof.

18. **(Previously presented)** A pharmaceutical composition comprising an anti-hepatitis C virally effective amount of a compound according to claim 1, or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof; and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier medium or auxiliary agent.
19. **(Original)** The pharmaceutical composition according to claim 18 additionally comprising a therapeutically effective amount of at least one other antiviral agent.
20. **(Withdrawn)** A method of treating a hepatitis C viral infection in a mammal comprising administering to the mammal an anti-hepatitis C virally effective amount of a compound according to claim 1, or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof, or a pharmaceutical composition comprising said compound or pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof; and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier medium or auxiliary agent.
21. – 22. **(Canceled)**
23. **(Withdrawn)** A method of inhibiting the replication of hepatitis C virus by exposing the virus to a hepatitis C viral NS3 protease inhibiting amount of the compound according to claim 1, or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.
24. **(Canceled)**
25. **(Previously Presented)** An article of manufacture comprising a composition effective to treat an HCV infection or to inhibit the NS3 protease of HCV; and packaging material comprising a label which indicates that the composition can be used to treat infection by the hepatitis C virus; wherein the composition comprises a compound according to claim 1 or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof, and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier medium or auxiliary agent .

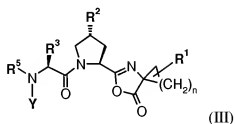
26. **(Previously Presented)** A process for the preparation of a compound according to claim 1, comprising:

a) reacting a compound of formula (II):



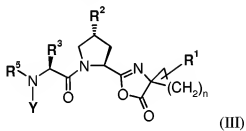
wherein R^4 , R^6 and m are defined as in claim 1, with a strong base so as to form the corresponding amide anion and

b) reacting an azalactone of formula (III):



wherein R^1 , R^2 , R^3 , R^5 , Y and n are defined as in claim 1, with the amide anion formed in step a).

27. **(Original)** An azalactone intermediate compound of formula (III):



wherein R^1 , R^2 , R^3 , R^5 , Y and n are defined as in claim 1.

28. **(Canceled)**